New Haven Peoples Center

Testimony to the Transportation Committee
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In Support of Drivers Licenses for Immigrants

Good evening committee chairs Sen. Maynard and Rep. Guerrera and members of the Transportation Committee.

Thank you for holding this hearing at Wilbur Cross High School in New Haven, in a community with many immigrants that welcomes diversity and is committed to fairness.

I am testifying in my capacity as coordinator of the New Haven Peoples Center, which opens its doors to immigrants and all workers.

As you can see from the turnout to this hearing, the issue of drivers' licenses is a major concern for day to day living in the immigrant community. This is not a new issue, but the time to act is now.

I am speaking in favor of eliminating immigration status from drivers license requirements. This is both of immediate impact to the immigrant community, and for the benefit of all Connecticut.

It is simply smart policy to allow everyone who passes the drivers test to qualify for a license. Otherwise, given the limits of our public transportation system, people are forced into situations where they cannot get to work, cannot get to the doctor, to child care or other urgent appointments on their own, as you will hear tonight.

The law as it now stands places immigrants without papers into a position that is very dangerous to them and to everyone on the road. If they drive and are stopped, they may face deportation and separation from their families. They may not know all the rules of the road, and cannot qualify for insurance.

From the practical point of road safety and for the good of the Connecticut economy, there is no question that immigration status should be removed as a qualification for drivers' license.

Denying drivers licenses on the basis of immigration status is discriminatory, and fosters racial profiling. These are also negative consequences to the current policy that must be corrected.

The values of inclusion and fairness and public safety all argue in favor of allowing drivers licenses, irregardless of immigration status, to everyone who passes the test. I urge you to act accordingly.